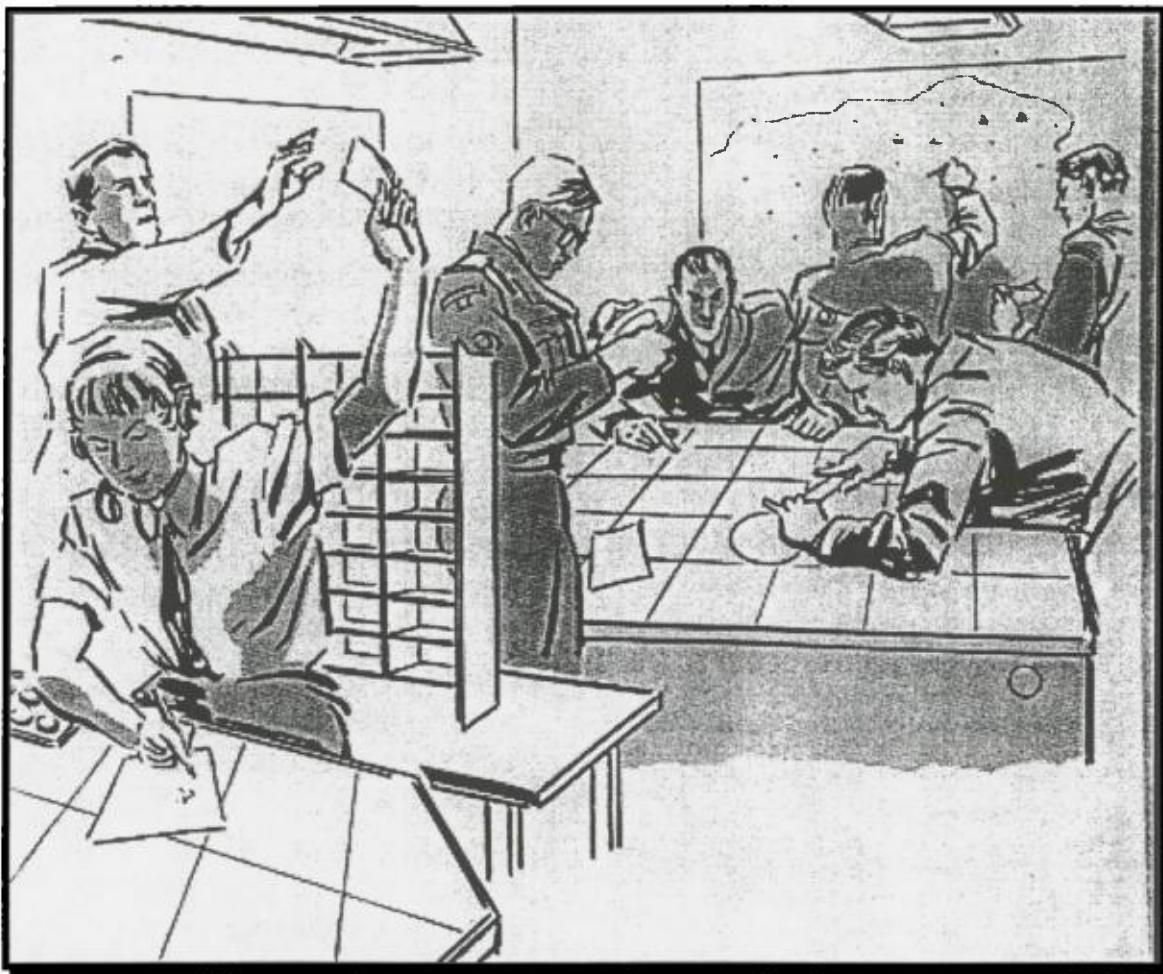


# SIREN

*The Newsletter of RSG*

**Issue 5 Summer 1997**



**This issue:**

**The Day they dropped a Nuclear Bomb on Birmingham**

**Fox's Facts**

**Life at Gull Perch**

## Welcome

Welcome to Issue 5 of *Siren*. The Cold War Research Study Group, is a specialist study group, parented by Subterranea Britannica. RSG is a non-political organisation, and aims to present an objective view of the UK's infrastructure and plans used in the period 1945-1995 for National Defence.

We will not infringe knowingly on any subject matter covered by the Official Secrets Act, nor will we become involved in any wild, conspiracy type theories.

In this issue, we have several interesting articles by Steve Fox - thanks for your efforts Steve. After our second get together this year, we now seem to have a active core membership of about 15. We will hopefully have another meeting at Hack Green later this year/early Spring and a meeting at Mistley AAOR.

If you have access to the internet and the World Wide Web there is now an usenet newsgroup **uk.rec.subterranea** in which readers may find items of interest. May I also take the opportunity to point out the RSG website, written and maintained by Richard Lamont:

<http://www.stonix.demon.co.uk/rsg/>

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## Fox's Facts Pt 1

1. The Kelvedon Hatch RGHQ was sold for £150 001. Given the price of two bedroom bungalows with wonderful rural views this was a real bargain (even ignoring the useful cellar)
2. The Guard Bungalow at Shipton RGHQ had false windows, inside was just a concrete box.
3. London Emergency planners envisaged needing 50 000 volunteers just to run the emergency feeding centres post strike.
4. The Home Office left 12 000 gallons of diesel in the tanks at Chilmark RGHQ.
5. The new Crowborough super-bunker's high tech fittings included pictures on the wall, a canteen that resembled a Mac Donald's and even artificial pot plants
6. You expect to go down into a bunker. At Kelvedon Hatch because the bunker was built into the side of a hill, with the entrance bungalow at the bottom, you actually go up.
7. The RGHQ under Government Buildings at Southport flooded when the tide came in. Equipment apparently included wellingtons.
8. During its refit in the 1980's - the 2 storey ex ROTOR R2 at Skendelby was given a new lower floor by removing the false floors to give an extra 4 feet of headroom and dividing the enlarged space in two.
9. Anyone using the emergency exit at the RGHQ at Braccla in Wales, would have been trapped. It was surrounded by impenetrable brambles.
10. The estate agents planning the sale of Kelvedon Hatch marked out the site by simply linking up the above ground

features such as the escape shaft, mast and diesel tank inlets and missed out nearly a third of the underground structure! [Steve has still not been paid for pointing this out! - Ed]

### **The day they dropped a Nuclear Bomb on Birmingham**

A secret Government committee conducted a detailed study of the aftermath of dropping a nuclear bomb on Birmingham to work out how to destroy the Soviet Union according to papers released by the PRO. It was estimated that the theoretical 1 megaton H-bomb would kill 280,000 people. But the analysis concluded that bigger bombs would be needed to make sure that Soviet cities "were knocked out". A similar committee still exists today.

JIGSAW, the Joint Inter-services Group for the Study of All-Out-War, met twice a month in the early 1960s and presented its findings to a high level audience in September 1962 the Games Room of a MoD building in central London. That audience included Earl Mountbatten and John Profumo.

Most of the details of the "Birmingham Study" remain secret to this day. The group was asked late in 1959 to "select 40 Soviet cities, attack on which would achieve from blast and fallout, assuming 1- megaton weapons and a radius of action of about 2000 nautical miles from London" The papers say "The JIGSAW study should only consider only effects on the population- the aim being to select targets so to pose the maximum threat to the greatest number of Russian(sic) people.

Because of the difficulties in making such an assessment, it was suggested

that a domestic model should be used. Birmingham was chosen, with the Home Office and the Civil Defence Regional controller providing useful information. Sir John Kendrew the chairman recalled that part of the brief was to make the military realise that thermo-nuclear weapons were for deterrence and nothing more". He also said "Part of JIGSAW's role was a moral one. I can remember that certainly the politicians and some of the military men were appalled by the Birmingham study". Coloured pins on a large scale map were used to indicate distribution of the killed and injured. [This article has been abridged from the Daily Telegraph of 23 December 1996 - Ed]

### **Fox's Facts Pt 2**

1. The Regional Controllers appointed during the last war were given extensive powers - which included the power to cull all homing pigeons.
2. The "Briefing Material for Wartime Controllers" circular from 1976 stated rather obviously that: "A large scale nuclear attack on this Country would completely disrupt the banking system on which the whole monetary economy is based"
3. In September 1988 only 53 County and 142 District emergency centres were considered to be operational against a target of 111 and 402 respectively.
4. The inventory for the RGHQ at Shipton included: 90 filling cabinets, 48 easy chairs, 20 canteen tables, 2 bookcases and 12 "office plants (artificial)"
5. Exercise Brace, a Civil Defence exercise held in 1957 for the Bristol Sub-Region, had as its scenario the invasion of the pro-western country of

**Moab by Phoenicia, a satellite of  
Barbaria**

6. The emergency feeding equipment allocate to Essex in the Mid-80s included -

600 Soyer Boilers

260 Field Kitchens

950 Milk Churns

36 500 plastic bowls

38 300 plastic spoons

(Note: The population of Essex, not including refugees from London is 1.5 million)

7. "It is thought that in a nuclear war the UK might expect 200 megatons of nuclear weapons of various sizes to be delivered against about 80 targets" - Home Office guide to Domestic Nuclear Shelters 1981

8. How to make tea for 175 according to "EPG Handbook Number 3 - Emergency Feeding":

a) Put 9½ gallons of water into a Soyer boiler and bring to the boil.

b) Put 14 oz of tea in bags into the water and draw the fire.

c) After 10 minutes agitate the bags and remove after a further 4-5 minutes.

9. Stew for 120 (from EPG3 - above):

a) Cut into pieces 16 lb. of fresh meat.

b) Place into a Soyer boiler with 8 lb. of crushed barley, 7 gallons of water and seasoning (if available)

c) Bring to the boil and simmer for 3-3½ hours stirring continuously to avoid sticking

d) Skim off as many barley husks as possible

e) Serve ½ pint per person

(note - barley is the most commonly grown grain and would have formed the backbone of emergency feeding)

10. "*A surprise attack of which we would only get 3 minutes warning, whilst not impossible is considered*

**"unlikely" SE London Group War Plan 1989.**

*"A surprise attack of which we would only get 4 minutes warning, whilst not impossible is considered unlikely"*

**Havering (NE London Group) Civil Defence Plan 1990**

Why the minute difference? And why were London's Emergency Planning Officers still continuing the myth of the "4 minute warning" anyway?

**Life at Gull Perch - October 1962**

The news was grim. Kennedy seems determined to force Khrushchev to take his nuclear missiles out of Cuba. A full scale war seems a real possibility. At the Central Office of Information I see a lot of classified information. The Public have not been told that the V-Bombers have been loaded with the new Yellow Sun H-bombs and that the Thor Missiles are being readied for immediate launch.... The 'phone call brought me out of my day-dream. I recognised the voice belonging to my contact at the Civil Defence Department of the Home Office. calmly, he told me to make my way to Gull Perch immediately. I had only been there a couple of weeks before for the big Fallex 62 exercise, but this time was for real.

The black uniformed CD Corps sergeant met me outside Kingsbridge Station, and with 3 others who had come down from London, we drove through the Devon Lanes. Most of the designated staff for Gull Perch were from Devon and the sergeant said that many of them had already arrived.

We followed the signs to Bolt Head, guided by the discreet markers of a white seagull perched on top a figure seven. After a short time the huge slab of concrete that is the operations block of Regional Seat of Government 7,

code named Gull Perch came into sight. This along with the huttied admin. blocks would administer the West Country if the increasingly likely war came. We stopped at a wire gate, where our numbered Home Office passes were checked by armed Military Police. RSG7 is a combined civil and military headquarters and most of the people in the compound wear a uniform. The Camp Commandant, an Army Major, who answers directly to the Regional Director of Civil Defence, seemed to have things well organised.

I was met by the Chief Clerk, a Senior Executive Officer from the Ministry of Transport in Plymouth, who showed me to my bunk in the dormitory - I got the top of the three beds - and reminded me to put my watch back an hour to "Zulu time" - GMT. He left me to put my change of clothes and wash kit into the small metal locker I had been allocated.

The Camp Commandant held a briefing at 1400 hours in the Mess Room. He outlined the worsening political situation and told us that our Regional Commissioner, the Minister of Aviation together with his deputy, a Junior Minister that I had not heard of, would arrive by helicopter shortly.

The expectation was that emergency powers would be granted by Parliament during the afternoon and the Regional Commissioners would assume control of their regions from midnight. Domestic arrangements would be the same as on exercises - 4 meals a day served in the cafeteria. Initially we would be on normal food, supplied by the NAAFI but there would be 30 days supply of componations to be used post strike. We also have a canteen open 24 hours a day selling tea, sweets, cigarettes, etc. Beer and spirits would be available, but only during normal licensing hours. These

would have to be paid for and the Chief Clerk could make advances of up to £5 against weekly pay.

The Commandant stressed that everything about the RSG and our presence in it was classified secret. There could be no private 'phone calls. It had been allocated a BFPO number and letters could be addressed to us using it. We could send letters which would not be censored but we were warned that revealing anything would constitute a grave breach of security.

The Chief Regional Scientific Advisor, a professor from an Oxbridge College then told us about the attack warning system. There were several Carrier Receivers throughout the RSG and all were giving out the test pip tone. In the event of an attack warning everyone was to get inside the protected operations block immediately. The same would apply for Attack Message Black and Grey. As the total staff was well over 300 it would be a bit crowded! If anyone goes outside during fallout conditions, they must take a personal dosimeter and have any radiation dose recorded.

My designated role is as number two in the Information Unit and after the briefing I went over to the Operations Block. This massive two story concrete structure was built by the RAF as a Radar Station about 10 years ago. Both floors have a central corridor with offices each side. The ventilators and de-humidifiers keep the atmosphere pleasant although it can be noisy. Which reminds me, we have to wear soft shoes in the dormitories as people will be sleeping at any time and we will be working a 12 hour shift system.

The Information Unit has its office on the top floor between the canteen and toilets - both of which may be well

used! Apparently, there should be enough water for washing and the toilets, but if the sewers fail we will have to use Elsans. There are showers but no washing machines - I hope every one has brought clean socks.

The Assistant secretary who will head the Unit has not arrived yet, but five of the expected six Higher Executive Officers had. They all looked nervous, one more so than the others. I later found out that his wife was due to have a baby at any time. He had not needed to come, we were all volunteers and no provision has been made to look after our families but he considered it his duty to come.

The office still has the maps we used on Fallex but we will need to arrange for the Chief Clerk to get us some more and some extra stationary. Our main role will be to prepare twice daily situation reports for the Commissioner, the other RSGs and central Government.

We started to get ourselves organised. I took my 'wants' list to the harassed Chief Clerk. He gave it straight back to me mumbling about the army grabbing everything worth having. I'd swear he almost said "didn't I know there was a war on?" I then went to the Counter Room which would handle all messages coming into and out of the RSG and talked to the Regional Communications Officer about having our incoming phonograms particularly any designated 'priority' or 'immediate' delivered.

After that there seemed little else to do but wait.....

[Notes - this article is largely based on restricted RSG training material from 1962 all the details are correct, except that the RSGs were not manned during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Gull Perch was the code name for RSG7 at Bolt

Head in South Devon. It was also the SRC described by Laurie in "Beneath the City Streets".]

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### **Kelvedon Hatch visit**

A year to the day after the first RSG visit to Kingsway, 15 RSG members spent the day at the former RGHQ 5.1 at Kelvedon Hatch. After a tour around the site by the owner, a seminar was held with topics such as Effects of Nuclear Weapons, The role of The RGHQ and Communications covered. by various speakers. A first Class lunch was followed by an open forum, in which many useful ideas were exchanged. The concept of Exercise Reclaim was discussed and it is now under way via the Sub Brit mailing list.

An excellent day was had by all, and thanks go to Mike Parrish for his hospitality and constant supply of tea and biccys!

### **Emergency Fire Fighting Equipment**

Fire service Circular 6/1984 listed the equipment held in Home Office Stores to be issued in the "Transition to War" period to the "Green Companies" which would support the peacetime Fire Brigades ("Red Companies").

This equipment included:

1079 Green Goddess emergency pumps

142 Land Rovers/Austin Gypsies

369 Bedford/Commer trucks

78 000 lengths of 75ft hose

2 321 lightweight portable pumps

87 500 lengths of 16ft piping

666 20 000 gallon circular steel dams

**That's all folks!**

## **That's all folks!**

As mentioned at the Kelvedon Hatch visit, this will be my last issue of *Siren*. I am very happy with how RSG is evolving and would like to pass the editorship to another pair of hands. Increasing personal and business commitments mean that I can no longer devote enough time to the newsletter. I hope a willing volunteer will step forward. I will still continue to play an active part in RSG (time permitting!)

Thanks for all your support.

## **Staffing the RGHQs**

The Regional Government Headquarters would have been responsible for the internal government of their region once a nuclear strike had rendered normal central government impossible. Under the Regional Commissioner it would decide policy and in effect be the executive or Cabinet passing decisions down to the County Council controllers and others who would put them into effect. It would also supply leadership, communications and a sense of continuity of Government. The staff reflected this in that they were those needed for survival and initial recovery. Thus the treasury and Education Departments were not represented. Post strike government would have been more akin to the 18th than the late 20th century - e.g. money gathering departments had no role.

Most regions had 2 RGHQs. One lead by the Regional Commissioner was the RGHQ(C) the other lead by his deputy, the RGHQ(DC). The nominal number of staff was 134 and 126 respectively with the RGHQ(DC) tending to have the deputies and lower ranked staff. Each Region had a reserve team of 65.

In the RGHQ(C) the commissioner was assisted by a Principle Officer and Assistant Principle Officer of Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretary rank respectively together with a secretariat of 7 who acted like a private or staff. The remaining staff fell into 3 groups:-

**A - Common Services Staff:** Including a legal adviser, a 4 man scientific team, the housekeeping staff of 11 (including 6 for the canteen) and the communications staff of 29. The latter included 2 maintenance staff each from the Home Office and BT. BT also provided 4 telecomms advisers.

**B - Government Staff:** 42 people from 10 departments. The largest contingents were from MAFF and the DoT both with 8 staff, including 4 commodities officers for MAFF and controllers for ports, shipping and transport. The 7 representatives of the DoE included a Local Government adviser, 2 engineers and 3 water co-ordinators. Representatives from the Coal, electricity and Oil Industries were included in the 6 Dept of Energy staff.

**C - Non-Government staff:** This section was dominated numerically by the Armed Forces whose 20 people included 5 staff officers, the rest being Signals, clerks and drivers. The BBC had 5 presenters and engineers to run the WTBS but additional staff would have been based at transmitter sites. The police and fire services had 2 and 5 staff respectively.

The 2 RGHQ teams were similar but the reserve was dominated by government department representatives in the almost complete absence of members of the armed forces, housekeeping and comms staff. However, the reserve team had some representation not found in the main teams, notably from the Treasury,

HMSO, the Post Office and Gas Industry.

There were very few junior clerical staff in the RGHQ with the exception of the communications team, even though they were equipped with numerous filing cabinets. The government staff was not particularly highly graded. Most department teams were headed by a grade 7 with most others being SEOs and HEOs.

The commissioner and deputy commissioner would have been junior cabinet ministers appointed at the time. The senior non-department staff were designated and appointed to a region although not to a particular RGHQ in it. The remainder of the staff were however not generally appointed by the departments concerned. There was apparently a problem in that most departments and people did not take the matter seriously and it was often difficult to find sufficient staff to attend RGHQ staff courses (Exercise Regard) at Easingwold. The assumption was that if events became serious, it would be easier to find the required volunteers. Staff would not be press-ganged and there would be no provision made for their families. Towards the end a committee was set up to consider the matter with a view possibly to allocating RGHQ roles according to a peacetime position as was done by most local authorities, but this committee only met once before the RGHQs were stood down.

The communications staff would have been provided by a nearby civil service office e.g. Crowborough would have been manned by the Land Registry staff and some of these staff actually went to the RGHQs every 6 weeks, supposedly for training, but more likely to test the equipment. The catering staff would have been provided by the Civil Service Catering Organisation

and the maintenance people by the PSA (prior to its privatisation). Oddly, the people who knew most about the buildings - the custodians - would not have had a place in the operational RGHQ.

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### RSG Needs You!

I hope you have enjoyed this issue of *Siren*. Remember, it needs YOUR input to make it successful. I always welcome articles and feedback.

To receive *Siren* on a regular basis (I try to produce at least 3 per year), join Subterranea Britannica - cost £12 (- £5 unwaged, +£3 for profit making organisations +£1 overseas). Membership and general information on Society can be obtained from the Joint Secretaries:

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